

**IN THE SPECIFICATION (with reference to the translation of the application
as amended during international preliminary examination, filed herewith, and attached
as Exhibit A):**

Please amend the heading on page 1 at line 4 as follows:

Description: **BACKGROUND**

Please delete the paragraph on page 4, beginning at line 11 as follows:

~~Advantageous embodiments of the method are the subject matter of claims 2 to 27.~~

Please amend the paragraph on page 5, beginning at line 29 as follows:

The means for doing this is an expanded utilization of automation in the mail centers so as to obtain detailed information about automatically processed mailpieces. A result is the additional out-sorting of mailpieces into “payment assurance compartments.” ~~compartments”.~~

Please amend the paragraph on page 6, beginning at line 9 as follows:

If no complete reference code is present on the mailpiece, then a reference code is imprinted on the basis of the automated checking of the postage and said reference code determines the associated physical sorting of the mailpieces. The physical sorting, as the result of the automated checking of the postage, is done, for example, according to the sorting features “insufficient postage” and “suspicion of fraud.” ~~fraud”.~~

Please amend the paragraph on page 10, beginning at line 11 as follows:

Moreover, it is advantageous for another partial evaluation to ~~comprise~~ include a comparison between the date when the digital postage indicium was generated and the current date. The integration of the date when the digital postage indicium was generated –

especially in encrypted form – increases the data security, since the comparison between the date when the digital postage indicium was generated and the current date prevents a multiple use of a given digital postage indicium for conveying mailpieces.

Please amend the paragraphs on page 12, beginning at line 32 as follows:

~~Advantageous embodiments of the device are the subject matter of claims 29 to 33.~~

Within the scope of the virtual FSM according to the invention, a data network ~~consists of~~ includes a complex system of data-processing means and of the data lines that connect the data-processing means, whereby a network can be distinguished from another network by its configuration.

Please amend the paragraph on page 14, beginning at line 1 as follows:

The reading means ~~consists of~~ includes a combination of a code reading unit for reading in the postage indicium and a video data recording unit for generating a video recording of the entire surface of the mailpiece. Moreover, if so desired, the reading means ~~can consist of~~ may include two physically separated units, one unit serving to read the postage indicium and the other unit serving to create a video recording of the data on the surface of the mailpiece.

Please amend the heading on page 15, beginning at line 6 as follows:

~~Brief description of the drawings~~

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Please amend the paragraphs on page 15, beginning at line 10 as follows:

Figure 1 ~~depiction~~ shows a schematic flow chart of the method according to the invention ~~on the basis of a schematic flow chart.~~

Figure 2 ~~depiction of~~ shows an example of a display according to the invention of evaluation results, broken down according to sorting features.

Figure 3 ~~depiction of~~ shows an example of the number of virtual compartments after the evaluation has been completed, taking into account SFM and PCF data records.

Figure 4 ~~depiction of an~~ shows another example of a display according to the invention of evaluation results as well as of details of the graphic information.

At page 15, immediately prior to the paragraph beginning at line 23, please add the following heading:

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Please amend the paragraphs on page 16, beginning at line 24 as follows:

Figure 3 shows another preferred embodiment of the invention. On the basis of the acquired graphic information, the authenticity of the SFM and PCF postage indicia is verified, so that the graphic information in this embodiment is sorted graphically – into virtual compartments. The results of the virtual checking 90 (Figure 1) of the postage are classified under the employed sorting features and displayed on the display device 130. In the depiction shown by way of an example in Figure 3, for instance, the following number of mailpieces could be sorted into the virtual compartments provided for them:

In the case of three mailpieces, the determined SFM identification is already in the negative file so that their graphic information is allocated to the virtual compartment “SFM in negative file” 200. None of the evaluated SFM identifications was previously in the positive file so that no graphic information is present in the virtual compartment “SFM in positive file” 210. Moreover, no SFM insufficient postage could be ascertained by the virtual checking of the postage, as a result of which the virtual compartment “SFM insufficient

postage” 220 does not contain any graphic information. However, all in all, seven mailpieces could be found whose SFM identification was not readable, which leads to a set of 7 items of graphic information in the virtual compartment “SFM not readable” 230. Moreover, the SFM currency (“SFM currency not readable” 240) was not readable for nine mailpieces, and the SFM franking (“SFM franking not readable” 250) was not readable for three mailpieces.

Further results of the evaluation show that no mailpiece with an incorrect PCF hash value was found by the evaluation (no graphic information in the compartment “PCF hash value not OK” 260), and furthermore that one mailpiece was found that had an impermissible PCF date, an impermissible PCF version and/or PCF insufficient postage 270. The last evaluation result of this example shows that one mailpiece was already in the PCF negative file (“PCF in negative file” 280). The above-mentioned graphic display of the evaluation results is such that, by means of a graphic activation on the display device or by means of the input device, all of the graphic information compiled in a given virtual compartment is listed.